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THE  
CHARGE

Of the Right Reverend Father in GOD

ROBERT *Butto*  
LORD BISHOP of *Butto* ELY,

DELIVER'D TO THE  
REVEREND the CLERGY  
OF HIS  
DIOCESE,

At CAMBRIDGE, *July* 23, 24, 1740.

AT HIS  
PRIMARY VISITATION; and Published  
at their Request.

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L O N D O N:

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THE  
CHARGE  
OF  
ROBERT  
LORD BISHOP of ELY, &c.

Reverend Brethren,



HEN, upon the Death of my pious Predecessor, (now with God) His MAJESTY was graciously pleas'd to nominate me his (however unworthy) Successor, and thereby place me in so near, and advantageous a Relation towards you, I was inclin'd to defer calling you together,

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till this Year ; since I understood, by that means, this Meeting would coincide with that Period of Time, in which according to the Custom of this Diocese you were to expect an Episcopal Visitation : For, as Assemblies of this kind are always attended with Trouble and Expence, I have long thought they should not be more frequently repeated, than Necessity, or Prudence, with regard to the Circumstances of the Times, and of those chiefly concern'd, might render them really useful.

And now that the Share I am at present to take in this Work may prove (if may be) of this Nature, I shall apply myself to you, both as Ministers of the Gospel in general, and of This Church in particular, that so, having always printed in your Remembrance, of what Dignity, and of how great Importance to Mankind your Function is, you may be the more effectually animated to a faithful conscientious Discharge of it : And from the Consideration of its superior Utility to all other Institutions whatever, may be able to convince the World, that both our Holy Religion, and those who are lawfully appointed to preach it, deserve a better Treatment, than they too frequently meet with from too many in it.

The various Ways, in which the Enemies of the Christian Faith, and Priesthood have endeavour'd to ruin the credit of both, is a Fact you are too much interested in to be ignorant of : Alas ! *these Things are not done in a Corner ; their Sound is gone out into all the Land*, and the Havock and Desolation they have there made is too great to be hid. Since then, (notwithstanding the Goodness of our Cause is such, that it does Honour to its Advocates) there are too few found willing to undertake the Defense of it, it cannot be deem'd an Offense to the Rules of Decency, and Propriety,



priety, if on such an Occasion as this, we attempt to plead our own Cause — by briefly shewing that the Institution of the Christian Ministry is calculated for the worthiest Ends and Purposes, from the great Benefit the World has in Fact received, and may still receive from a prudent affectionate Discharge of it.

And here (that I may not be suspected of Partiality in a Cause that requires nothing but Justice) I shall offer the Testimony of a Writer in this Matter, (whose Penetration and Judgment in Men and Things are confessedly great) who had no personal separate Interest to prepossess him in favour of that Establishment, or any Motives to engage him in the just Defense of it, but what must arise from a generous Love of Truth, and a benevolent Spirit to Mankind. — “ That a  
 “ numerous Order of Men (says this Writer) should be con-  
 “ secrated to the Study of the most sublime, and beneficent  
 “ Truths, with a Design to propagate them by their Dis-  
 “ courses, and Writings; to inform their Fellow Creatures of  
 “ the Being, and Attributes of the Deity; to possess their  
 “ Minds with the Sense of a future State; and not only to  
 “ explain the Nature of every Virtue, and moral Duty, but  
 “ likewise to persuade Mankind to the Practice of them by  
 “ the most powerful, and engaging Motives, is a thing so ex-  
 “ cellent, and necessary to the Well-being of the World, that  
 “ No-body but a modern Freethinker could have the Fore-  
 “ head, or Folly to turn it into Ridicule.”

This, without doubt, is an amiable Image of the Christian Priesthood; but that the ingenious Author has not herein shewn himself a greater Friend to us, than he has to Truth, or amus'd himself with an agreeable Speculation, which had no correspondent Facts to support it, we might appeal to the Primitive Preachers of the Gospel (if this Age should  
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be thought unhappily to want pregnant Proofs thereof) by whose Labours Mankind were brought not only to a Knowledge of God, and Profession of Faith in Christ, but persuaded also to live according to their Faith: And herein indeed consisted chiefly the great Blessing the World was to receive by the Institution; it is the great Change it was design'd to work in Men's Lives and Conversations which makes it truly valuable;—accordingly we observe from Ecclesiastical History, that as many as were at first converted to the Belief of Christianity were converted to the Practice of it: They were eminent for their Virtue and Holiness; they rested not in outward Professions and Appearances, but manifested their Faith by their Works, and did Honour to their Teachers, not only by hearing the Law, but by doing it: Being persuaded by the preaching of the Word of God, (says the Apologist) “ We not only believe, but live; we, “ who were before addicted to filthy Lusts embrace the “ strictest Chastity; we, who before valued Riches, and Possessions above all Things, have now all Things in Common distributing to every Man according to his need; we, “ who by Hatred and Murders mutually rag'd against each “ other, and refus'd to converse with those who were not “ of our own Tribe, since the preaching of Christ to the “ World, laying aside all Bitterness, we live lovingly together, we pray for our Enemies, and for the Conversion “ of those that unjustly hate us.” By this faithful Account we find, that, as the Christian Ministry was appointed for the most beneficial Purposes, so the Success thereof happily answer'd the End:—The World was humaniz'd, enlighten'd, reform'd; This was *the Victory that overcame the World*, Piety to God, Peace and universal good Will towards men; These were the Achievements, These the Trophies of this despis'd

despis'd Order of Men: The World sure might forgive us this only Injury.

The Welfare, the Improvement, the Felicity of Mankind are, or ought to be, the laudable Intent of every wise Institution, and Establishment amongst Men; in proportion as these are calculated to answer this great End, so are they worthy of more, or less Honour, and Encouragement: This is a Proposition so evident, that no Man who loves, or knows Mankind can dispute. May we not then with the Words of Truth and Soberness magnify our Office? will, can any Profession, however useful, however honourable, contend this Prize with the Christian Priesthood? Nay, (*we are Fools perhaps for boasting, but are we not compell'd to it?*) will even Government, and Civil Laws themselves, (to whose Care and Providence the World owes great Quietness, and by whose Administration many worthy Deeds are done to the Nations of the Earth, which ought at all Times, and in all Places to be accepted with all Thankfulness) yet even here may we not without Arrogance in our Cause, or the Imputation of the Crime of *Læse Majestatis* claim our Dues?

The true Light in which these Points are to be exhibited to the View of prejudic'd Men, is, seriously to consider — what is the End, which Civil Laws and Magistrates, Religion and its Preachers, either respectively propose, or can attain: Thus situated, Men would soon discover the true Rule of judging in this Case: Do they help to civilize and make Men social? Do they prohibit and restrain Men from doing Evil one to another? Do not we do more? (*our Enemies themselves being Judges*) The Laws we preach forbid not only to *do*, but to *think* Evil to our Neighbour: Are they employ'd in forming the outward Man? our Care is to reform the Heart: Do they require Justice? we exact Love,



Love, Benignity, and the doing to all as we would be done by: Do They claim Obedience for Wrath's Sake? We press it from a surer Principle,—*That* of Conscience: Do they enforce their Will by temporal Considerations? knowing the Terrors of the Lord we persuade Men: In a Word, to the eternal Disparagement of Legal Righteousness, 'tis certain, a Man may be, as touching the Law, blameless, and yet, notwithstanding any Obligation arising from *that*, omit all the essential Offices of Humanity, such as Love, Compassion, and Beneficence, &c. which, as *Seneca* says, *Extra publicas tabulas sunt*, which the Laws of Man, neither require; or can enforce; and consequently, tho' in the Sense of the Law he may answer the Character of a good Subject, one, *Qui Consulta Patrum, Qui Leges juraque servat*, yet may notwithstanding be in Reality, and in the Eye of Religion a very bad Man: Indeed the Civil Magistrate has in all Ages been so sensible of the Defect of human Laws, that he has always call'd in the Aid of Religion the better to obtain his End; but how can Religion be of any publick Service unless it be publickly taught? and how shall it be so taught, unless there be Persons properly ordain'd, and set a-part to the Office, as well as the Civil Magistrate is publickly and solemnly appointed to *His*? These Things are so self-evident, that I have always wonder'd how any Man could keep up the Character of being a Friend to Civil Government, who is avowedly none to the Christian Religion, and Priesthood: Behold then the wide Disproportion between both the Design, and Effects of these Institutions! The Distance is no less than from East to West, than between real Virtue, and the Appearance of it; between partial Obedience, and universal Righteousness; in a Word, between Things temporal, and Things eternal.

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Since then such is the Nature, Design, and Excellency of the Office, may we not in the Spirit of Meekness ask, Whence all this Bitterness, this traditional Ill-will, which has pass'd from Generation to Generation among the Children of this World against it? Since the Genius and Spirit of our Religion have been better known, and Men had time enough dispassionately to examine, and observe the Design of That, and its Teachers, why is That still a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offense? and why do they still pass thro' the *Strife of Tongues*? why are they traduc'd as evil Doers, and their good Works evil spoken of, even by Men that pretend to the sacred Distinctions of Reason and Virtue? — We have seen their Writings, Brethren; we have heard their Blasphemies: In them we find they can assign no good Reason for their ill Treatment of us; the *true* one we are not to expect from them; and, I fear, they would accuse us of breach of Charity, if we should publish it for them: Contented then with that which has been, more or less, the Lot of every Man that has dar'd to do his Duty, let us bring no railing Accusation against them; but steadily and calmly pursue the Work of our Calling, be diligent in the Exercise of the several Branches, and Duties thereof. You have heard 'tis a Calling worthy of you, and you will find by a serious Application to it, that as it deserves, so it requires all the Faculties, and Powers both of Body and Mind to discharge it well; and wo be to you if you do not!

The farther Use I shall make of this Opportunity shall be to give you some Rules for your Observation in the Discharge of some Parts of your Function; your Attention will the better enable you to judge of their Usefulness and Propriety: And here since so many excellent Things are spoken of, and have been done by Preaching, I shall begin with

*that* Branch of your Office : I have the more Right to be heard on this Head, because, by the Constitution, and Canons of our Church, the Exercise hereof, according to your own Choice and Discretion, is dependant on the Will and Authority of your Bishop : And here it cannot be necessary I should premise any thing concerning the previous Acquisition of those Parts of Learning, which might serve, as προαίdeυματα, to qualify you for the able Discharge of this difficult Part of your Function. The Education, which many of you at least have had in, and the Vicinity of your respective Cures to this Place, famous for Learning, and all Parts of useful Erudition, may justly supersede, and render all Caution on this Head abundant : It would be injurious to suppose — that a University, which has for successive Generations fitted up Men able to fill, and adorn the most important Offices in the State, should so far forget the Primary End of its Institution, as to be less careful in preparing those of her Disciples who are design'd for the Church.

The first Rule then I shall lay down shall be concerning the Manner of speaking. — As the Exercise of Preaching is a publick Exercise, intended for the Use of the Audience, the Preacher's first Care should be to speak so, as to be distinctly heard, else the Good he designs is absolutely defeated — That lifeless (I had almost said silent) inarticulate Way of Speaking, which I have often observ'd, and as often lamented : What Wonder is it, if it should produce no other Effect, than what a still whispering Voice naturally does ? if thus (may I say to every one of you) *Mandata loqueris*. The Poet has told you what a judicious Hearer will say : The Business of a Preacher is not to mutter, but to proclaim : He must, as the Prophet says, lift up his Voice, like a Trumpet, if he would effectually shew his People their Transgressions : He  
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that is too sparing of his Voice, however profuse, or choice he may be of his Words, and Matter, will deserve no other Censure, than what the Great Apostle passes on him, who prays in publick in an unknown Tongue; — “ He may pray “ or give Praises well, but the other is not edified.”

Next to speaking with a proper Elevation is, delivering what you have to say with a becoming Pathos, and Energy: What you say is not only to be heard, but remember'd, applied, and practis'd; if you would therefore have your Discourses affect the Hearts of your Audience, you must first seem to be affected with them yourselves; you must speak no only so, as to be heard, but, if you would do any good, if you would instruct to purpose, if you would really edify your Audience, you must speak so, as to be heard with Pleasure, and Attention: No-body will think those Truths of great Importance, which are languidly utter'd: If you seem indolent in the Manner of proposing them, you may be assur'd your People will be, as indifferent, in receiving them; — are they supine, and negligent? no Wonder; — they learn it of their Teachers; Can you hope they should think Attention to the Word preach'd their Duty, while by want of a proper Fervour in speaking, you seem to think it so little your own? There is a wide Difference between Vociferation, and a proper Elevation of Voice, between an Enthusiastical Agitation, and a pathetic, decorous Action: The Difference perhaps is easier perceiv'd, than describ'd. I hope I shall not be misunderstood, since I *Speak unto Wise Men* who can judge and distinguish *what I say*.

There is another Thing, which, if not of so great Importance, has its Use, and ought not to be neglected — I mean a proper erect Posture, attended with a graceful Gesture; These at first Sight bespeak the Attention, have an involun-

tary Effect upon the Hearers, and operate in favour of the Preacher much the same, as we observe a becoming Mien, and graceful Motion do in the common Intercourses of Life, in Favour of those, who are so happily distinguish'd: The Truth is — Mankind are naturally caught by outward Appearances; and the favourable Prejudices those Appearances create, will remain on the Mind, unless, upon a more intimate Knowledge, we discover something disagreeable in the Man, which will, as naturally efface the first Impressions; whereas an aukward, negligent Gesture, and Manner, operate quite the contrary; and it has been often seen, that the unlucky, injudicious Starts, and Motions of some Preachers have marr'd (at least among the less serious Part of an Audience) all the good Effects which their wise Discourses would otherwise have commanded.

These Things, which I have been now pressing, may perhaps appear to some of too little Consequence to be seriously insisted on: Such (if such there be) would do well to consider—that, in the Discharge of Religious Duties, God requires the best Performances both, of Body, and Mind, and that, as a late Moral Writer has observ'd, it must be immoral not to perform them in the very best Manner we are able, agreeably to that of the Apostle—whatever we do of this Nature, *do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto Men.*

But, as the Manner of discharging this Part of your Function is much to be regarded, the Matter of your Preachments is undoubtedly much more; and he that is in earnest to acquit himself well of this Duty, to the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind, will neglect neither: And here not to be particular—you will soon be determin'd to a Choice of proper Subjects, by a due Reflection on the End, and Design of Preaching, or teaching in Publick; which is the very  
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same with that of Religion in general — not to employ, or amuse Mens time about unprofitable Questions, or Actions, but to instruct them in, and persuade them to, all practical Points of Faith and Duty: Formerly such was the Care of our Church in this Matter, that, by the Constitutions of one, or two of our Metropolitans, even Preachers, that were allow'd, and licens'd to preach (for all were not) were confin'd to such Subjects, as were prescrib'd them; and, after the Reformation, this Care was still continued, and Homilies were set forth, by publick Authority, to be read every *Sunday* by such of the Clergy, as were not licens'd to preach their own Compositions; — but tho', from that happy *Æra*, Popish Darkness wore off, and Light by Degrees has been diffus'd among us, insomuch that Learning, and Knowledge are become the Ornament (and may Virtue be the Stability) of our our Times: This Restraint has been taken off, and all in Holy Orders are allow'd, with the Bishop's License, to preach in their several Churches according to their own Discretion, without being confin'd to any Particular Subject, except that of the King's Supremacy, which by the Canons of 1603 you are oblig'd to maintain four Times in every Year: Tho' such (I say) is the present Indulgence, founded on a Presumption of the Increase of Learning, and more thorough Knowledge of the Scriptures — yet no one should now think himself at Liberty so far to deviate from the Original Design of Preaching, as generally to dwell on such Subjects, as are more proper to amuse, and entertain, than instruct or reform: — Speculative, or Controversial Points are, especially in Country unlearned Audiences, as much as possible to be avoided, as tending more to fill the Head with Notions, than to rectify the Will, and influence the Practice; and moral Subjects to be explain'd and enforc'd: Lessons of this kind are easier understood,



derstood, inasmuch as they are more natural, lie level to the Capacities of all Men; and their immediate Tendency to that Peace, and Happiness, which all desire, is by all, without any Subtilty of Reasoning discover'd; whereas speculative Points, or Sciences (as one has well observed) if consider'd in, and for themselves only, are merely useless, and therefore no wonder Providence has created so few among Mankind, that have any Talents for such Knowledge. All your Labours therefore of this kind should be directed to the same End, which it should be the Concern not only of all Religion, but of all Learning, and Knowledge also, to promote, I mean—real Virtue, and Goodness, founded in the Fear of God, and on the Love of Man; that Religion, whose principal Design is not the Promotion of this Virtue, may be State—or Priest—craft, but cannot be from God; and that Philosophy, whose Fruits are not of this Heavenly Kind, is what the Great Apostle styles *Vain Deceit, fleshly Wisdom, and Knowledge falsely so called*; and consequently—that Preacher, whose Discourses generally turn upon Subjects of an inferior, less certain, less useful, tho' more curious Nature, mistakes his Business, and wanders from the Mark: He may perhaps by this Method, create to himself a false Fame, but he will not answer the Character of him whom St. Paul wills to be apt to teach.

I hope no one will think himself too much confin'd by this Method, or that the Field of Morality is too narrow a Theatre, wherein to display his Talents, either natural, or acquir'd, unless he intrudes, as the Apostle says, *into Things he has not seen, and affects to be wise above what is written*;—unless he diverts into curious Speculations, into *Questions that gender Strife* (as St. Paul characterises them); which, as they are always fitter for the Press, than the Pulpit; so for their Utility (to the Generality of Christians at least) seem

seem too much a-kin to those Questions, which *Seneca* reproaches some, both *Greeks* and *Romans*, for being critical, and operose in the Discussion of, as Matters that carried an Air of superior Learning, and Genius; and of which he pronounces — that 'tis doubtful whether it would not have been better for a Man never to have applied himself to his Studies at all, than to have embarrass'd himself in such as tended to cure no Man of his Evil Lufts, and Passions, or make any one more good, just, or beneficent, the forming of which, and the like Virtues in the Hearts of Men is the laudable Ambition of Christian Preaching.

But indeed, upon Experience it will be found, that the Difficulty is quite on the other Side, and that in fact it requires, as much (not to say more) Force of Reason, and Eloquence, of Learned Skill, and Address to teach, to exhort, to persuade Men to live well, as it does to dispute well, or think right, since Mankind are much easier convinc'd, than converted, and will more readily part with speculative, than with practical Errors. Those great Worthies of Antiquity, who before our Saviour's Time, engag'd in the sacred Work of civilizing, and instructing Mankind, had no such Fears: They pursued this Plan, and thought it no Diminution of their philosophic Character, or a Dishonour to their Parts, to make Men wiser by such Lessons, as were principally contriv'd to make them better; *Pythagoras*, who as *Aristotle* tells us, was the first that attempted to treat of Virtue, bent his Labours (as a late Writer of his Life observes) to instruct, and reform the World, and observes — that his Eloquence must be very powerful, since his Instructions had so great Effect, as to make the Inhabitants of a very large Town, deeply plung'd in Debauchery, entirely quit their luxurious Way of Living, and betake themselves to a Life of strict Sobriety, and Virtue:

*Socrates*

*Socrates* too (ever to be mention'd with Honour by Men of Probity, and Conscience) obtain'd the Character of being the wisest Man of the Heathen World, even in the Judgment of the Oracle; and why?—for calling Men off from Matters of Speculation, more curious than profitable, and applying himself to the Study of Morality, and discoursing on it more methodically, and ably, as is observ'd, than any who had gone before him. The Great *Roman* Orator! Did he sink his Character, or discover less masterly Talents in his Works of Morality, and Philosophy, than he had establish'd the Reputation of before by those of Civil Eloquence, and Policy? or is the World less benefited by the former, than pleas'd with the latter? For my own part, I confess I am apt to forgive *Cæsar* his Attempt upon the Liberties of his Country, as often as I reflect, that his Success therein gave Birth to the Moral Works of that great Man, from whose Precepts of Virtue, and Rules of Duty, the World might reap ample Reparation for all the Injuries, the then Mistress of it receiv'd, from the Ambition, and Dominion of the other.

But, my Brethren, as I intend not to recommend the Preaching of mere Morality, so I shall not rest this Point upon mere human Authority, for great as these Authorities (considering the then State of the World) are, we have still greater to confirm us in the Choice of this Method, and to animate us in the steady Pursuit of it: Our Saviour, to whom *God gave not the Spirit by Measure*, and his Apostles, *who were endued with Power from on High*, employ'd, for the most Part, all their natural, and divine Gifts in thus instructing the World: --- Throughout the whole Course of their Ministry, they labour to re-establish Moral Truths in their utmost Purity, and Practice, as the One Thing necessary: They rescue them from the erroneous Maxims, and corrupt Glosses of Scribes and Pharisees, and establish them  
upon



upon their true Basis -- The Fear of the Creator of the World, and Faith in the Redeemer of it.

Our Saviour's Sermons were all plain, and familiar, tending to enforce some Moral Duty: Every Incident and Occurrence were artfully improv'd into a Lesson of Piety and Virtue; curious, and captious Problems he not only neglected, as unworthy the Great Teacher of Mankind, but discountenanc'd them in others: When the *Jews* upon the Cure of the Man who was born blind ask'd him --- *who did sin, this Man, or his Parents*, that he was so afflicted from his Birth? He did not vouchsafe, even upon that Occasion, to determine a Dispute, which in all probability had been long agitated among them, as a Matter of Importance, but gave them an Answer suited more to their Wants, than their Expectations—the sole End of that Dispensation of Providence was the same, for which he, and all Mankind were sent into the World, that the *Glory of God might be manifested in him*: When, after his Resurrection, his Disciples ask'd him more ambitiously, than piously, about the Restitution of the Kingdom to *Israel*, 'tis remarkable — that tho' he had *before* promis'd to send the *Holy Spirit upon them to guide them into all Truth*, yet he then nevertheless tells them—it *was not for them to know the Times and the Seasons, the Knowledge of which God had reserv'd to himself*; intimating, that in such Truths only, as were necessary to qualify them for the End of their Calling, — the Reformation of the World, were they to expect Assistance, or Illumination from above. The History of our Saviour's Conversation with the two Disciples in their Walk from *Emmaus*, I have always consider'd in the same Light: 'Tis there said — *that our Saviour beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself*. Now, considering the great Disputes, that have

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arose since among Learned Men, concerning the true Meaning of those Prophecies, and the various Interpretations, that have been put on those Parts of Scripture, how necessary (may some think) would the Continuation in the Church of this authentic Exposition have been: Here would have been an infallible Judge indeed to have resorted to, in all our Controversies of Faith; but we find in Fact, the Blessed Jesus, and the Holy Spirit thought otherwise: There is enough written without it, to induce a practical Belief — *that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that is all that can be necessary, since (as St. John says) thus *believing we shall have Life through his Name*.

Upon the Whole then, will you not much better consult your own Fame, and the Good of your People (which you ought always to make inseparable) by joining yourselves to the Number of such illustrious, divine Teachers, than by symbolizing with those, who even, in the most early Ages of the Church, as the Apostle stigmatizes their Folly, *gave heed to Fables, and endless Genealogies, which engender'd Strife*, caused Questions, and Disputes, rather *than godly edifying in the Faith*, to the Destruction of that Charity, which is the End of the Commandments, both of the Law and the Gospel.

This learned Affectation, and Vanity in running off, from the plain practical Doctrines, to speculative abstracted Notions, to high Points of Faith, and Discipline, to a zealous Contention for Matters of outward Form, and Modes of Worship, appears to me, to have laid the first Stone of that Babel of Idolatry, and Superstition, which quite chang'd the Face of True, and ancient Christianity; when, from about the Seventh Century downwards, Doctrines of Images, Reliques, Worship of Saints, Pilgrimages, Rights of Holy Church, Dominion

minion of the Pope, and other such Points, which had no Connexion with true Holiness, succeeded by Degrees the reading and explaining the Scriptures to the People, and raising useful Lessons of practical Piety, and Virtue from them. Our Forefathers continued long under this Cloud; and, tho' at the Reformation, they happily emerg'd from it, yet soon after falling into Disputes, and eager Contentious, about Points, which, if true, contributed nothing to the Advancement of true Piety, and Virtue; and, if false, could tend, some of them, only to administer Delusive Hopes; and others, to create imaginary Fears, or, what is worse, to inflame, and exasperate one Teacher and Sect against another: This Diversion at that time, from the true End of the Reformation, which was to re-establish a pure Faith, and uncorrupt, useful, and christian Moral Doctrines laid the Foundation of that Division among Protestants, which has, more or less, ever since prevail'd amongst them; and can never be so happily healed by any Method, as by a universal, uniform Scheme of preaching, and enforcing the Practice of all Christian Virtue, and Morality among our People, as the only Thing, that can render them acceptable unto God: This will be our strongest Bulwark against the Attacks of Idolatry, and Superstition in every Age, and under every Shape, as well against Those from whom we have separated, as against Them who separate from us: For all Denominations of Christians whatever must confess — that *God is in that People of a Truth*, who prove themselves *to be in his Son Christ Jesus*, — not by any secret Call, not by any Enthusiastic Pretenses, or arrogant Presumptions; but, by the unerring Mark and Seal of the Spirit, visible to all, by *being new Creatures, created again in Righteousness and true Holiness*; — *as many as walk according to this Rule*, whatever Name, or Distinction they



may have here, *Peace be on them, and Mercy*; for they are the true *Israel of God*.

If you are by this time convinc'd of the Prudence, Uprightness, nay Necessity, of this Method in general, your Judgment, upon observing the particular Wants, and Faults of your People in the several Branches of their Duty, will point out to you successively the most proper Topics of Discourse, without my being more particular. It cannot be necessary to caution you, always to teach the Practice of true, and Moral Duties, agreeably to the Principles, and Profession of the Christian System; and to enforce their Obedience, from a Regard to the Command of God, and the Desire of his Favour, and Acceptance through the Merits, and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ; and thro' Fear of the Divine Displeasure, which, as revealed in the Gospel, will attend the Neglect of them: These are of the Essence of Christian Morality, and distinguish it from that pompous one taught by him, who was by way of Eminence call'd the Philosopher, which an attentive Reader, as one has well observ'd, will appear to be merely civil, recommended upon temporal, social Considerations only, and therefore the Practice thereof must necessarily fail, as often as the Arguments on which it was founded.

Nor would I be understood to recommend Moral Subjects to the absolute Neglect of the positive Institutions, and positive Doctrines of the Gospel, as if no Truths could be discovered but the Points of Duty necessary, but what human Reason could comprehend, or fully account for; This would be to compare the Authority of Reason at the Expense of that of Revelation; and to fall in with the fond Opinion of those, who make Reason the Standard of all divine Truths, and boldly reject every Doctrine, which they cannot measure by that Rule; whereas the true Method, I think, of judging

Points is to have recourse *to the Law, and to the Prophets* — to consult calmly, and impartially, like sincere Lovers of Truth, what the Scriptures say thereupon: If these, taken in their most plain, precise, and obvious Meaning, declare such Things to be true, we ought to believe them, however they may appear above our Reason, and Understanding: If we pay not this Submission to the express Words of the Scriptures, we must, in effect, suppose them writ, not only in a Manner far below what Inspiration, but (with Reverence be it spoke) what Common Sense, or common Honesty would direct; for 'tis to suppose, that they have in Words, when taken in their most natural Sense, and Construction, and that too, without the least Caution given to take them in any other, declar'd such and such Things for true, which yet in fact are absolutely false: If this be granted, all Certainty of the Scripture is destroy'd, and consequently all Use: The fatal Consequence of which, they would do well seriously to weigh, who have invented a Scheme of believing, and defending Christianity; and yet thus sap the Foundation of it, by contending for the Right of a more infallible Interpreter of the Scriptures, than the Scriptures themselves are; — But what? — Is Reason then to be given up, as a useless Thing in Religion? No, in the Name of God maintain its Empire; the more the better, provided it be exercis'd over Mens Passions, and corrupt Inclinations, which are its natural Liege Subjects; but extend it not beyond its due Bounds; suffer it not to encroach upon the Authority of Scripture; preserve *that* sacred, and inviolable, like Men that have been taught that they *are to be sav'd, not only by Works, but by Faith also.*

Before I quit this Subject, I must recommend to you a Practise, which I do not know, whether it be at all at present us'd by the Clergy, and which, I am persuaded, if brought into

into Custom, will contribute very much to the success of your Ministry, that is — for those of you in the same Vicinity, to meet frequently, at your own Houses, and confer together concerning the Religious State of your respective Parishes, and the best Manner of carrying jointly on the common End of your Profession; this is a Method, which the Men of Business take, in order to prosecute their several Vocations with Success, and they find their Account in it: And why should *the Children of this World be in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light*? By this Method you will best discover the prevailing Vices among your People; for the same Moral Infection, like That, which is Natural, generally spreads thro' a whole Neighbourhood; They are *Both* caught by Conversation, and are not to be stopt effectually, but by the united Care, Vigilance, and Skill of those who are appointed on purpose to prevent, or cure such Evils; Now by this Regimen of adapting your joint Monitions, both public and private, to the particular Case of your Patients, you will not only best prevent the Contagion of bad Example in practise; but also, most effectually *banish, and drive away from among you, all strange and erroneous Doctrine*; the happy Consequence whereof will be — *There will be no Place left among you, either for Error in Religion, or Viciousness in Life.*

And here, I might cease all my Instructions, where I hope all your Labors will happily end; after having observed to you in the Words of the Philosopher, (the Prudence of which I doubt not you will every one approve) *Facere docet Philosophia non dicere, et hoc exigit, ut ad Legem suam quisque vivat, ne orationi Vita dissentiat, ut ipsa inter se Vita unius sine Actionum Dissensione, coloris sit: maximum hoc est, et Officium Sapientiae, et Judicium, ut et ipse sapiens ubique par sibi idemque sit* — And here I might well dismiss you, but, as it is your Duty,



Duty, and as you are appointed for this very thing, to do all the Good you can to the People of God, as well out of the Pulpit, as in it, as well by your private Monitions, and Exhortations, as by your public Exercises; There is another Branch of your Pastoral Office, which I must earnestly recommend to your Care, and to which you solemnly engag'd your selves, each at your Ordination, and that is — to *maintain and set forward, as much as lieth in you, Quietness, Peace, and Love, among all Christian People*: This is closely connected with the other, for your prudent discharge of the first will facilitate, and help forward the Success of your Labours in the second, for as St James says, *whence come Wars and Fightings among you, come they not hence, even from your Lusts?*--- 'Tis Fraud, and Cozenage, a Spirit of Avarice, and Worldly Gain, of Envy and Malice, an officious Medling, and talking of other Men, and their Affairs, some such evil Cause as this, which generally breaks the private Peace of Families, and Neighbourhoods: Now if by your Moral Lectures, you have effectually taught them to be sober, and honest, *to render to all their Dues; to be contented with such Things, as they have; to be quiet, and do their own Business*, you have laid the Ax to the Root of the Tree, you have in a great measure removed the Causes of private Strife, and Discord, and thereby happily secur'd this part of your Duty.

And this peaceable friendly Situation among themselves, being the Effect of their Religion, and Virtue, will not fail to extend its Influence on the Public Tranquility: For as all Communities among Men are, but the Aggregate of so many private Persons, and Families, the Temper and Complexion of the whole, will be of the same Nature with the constituent Parts; Men who have learnt to follow Peace at Home, will not easily be brought to disturb *That* of the Public; those, who know it to be their  
Duty

Duty to speak *Evil of no Man*, will think it much more so, *not to speak Evil of Dignities*: Such will not reproach their Governors, whom perhaps they do not know, nor condemn their Measures, which they cannot understand; but shew the same Temper towards those, who are set over them that they do to their Equals: Their good Actions they will commend, and justify; their doubtful ones (the Springs, and Motives to which are hid from them) they will judge with Candor, hoping the best, and always inclin'd rather to favour than find Fault; Faction, and Sedition, *Such* will no more encourage in the State, than they would Feuds, and Animosities at home; knowing that the one is inconsistent with the Character of a good Neighbour; the other, with that of a faithful Subject; and Both, with the Duty of a sincere Christian: That such is the present Disposition of the People of this Land, *we must have Ears and hear not, Eyes and see not*, to believe; but, that this Harmony is only (if at all) to be obtain'd by the Method I have been recommending, the Nature (if we unhappily want the Experience) of the thing may convince us:

And is not Peace, and Goodwill a Work worthy of all your Labors to promote? What greater Blessing can a good Man desire, on this side the Grave, than to see *Jerusalem the City of his God* at Peace and *at Unity in itself*; If our Divisions be got to such a Head, that the Symptoms look dreadful, Despair in the Physicians will make them fatal, the more threatening the Wounds (which our Divisions have made) look, the more diligent should you be in pouring in Oil, and binding them up. And what a lasting Impression to your Honour will such a benevolent Conduct leave on the Hearts of Men? When they see you, in the Spirit of your heavenly Master, thus going about

*about doing good*, promoting the Work of Heaven by making Peace on Earth, --- will not the People bless you? And will not their Rulers protect you? Nay will they not, *for their Brethren and Companions sake, seek to do good to the House of our God*, when they find both themselves, and their Subjects receive such substantial Good, from the Labors of those who wait at it's Altars?

In a word, if you thus prove your selves the Friends of Government, ye can never fail of being beloved by the Government — But if you should (I am unwilling to suppose it) be found, like Others, full of Strife, and Debate, factious, disobedient, encouragers of evil Reports, *marvel not, if the World hates you*, you must expect (for you will deserve) to be treated worse than Others, if ye take no Care to be better than Others: But I forbear to pursue such disagreeable, and, I hope, improbable Suppositions, and chuse rather to recommend to, as I expect from you, such a Behaviour, as your Duty to God, and Gratitude to the King demand; from whose mild and legal Government, and steady Administration, discourag'd by no Difficulties, or Misrepresentations, (and under which, we in particular have lately receiv'd (I hope) a never to be forgotten Instance of their Affection for the establish'd Church) Thus happily situated, I say, (if Men could be brought, but to confess the Happiness they feel) all Ranks, and Conditions of Men, amongst us, receive all legal Protection, and Safety, both in their Persons, and Properties; and enjoy the Blessing of Liberty, in particular, to so great a degree, that daily Experience, and Matter of Fact will support me, in describing our present Constitution, as a Roman Writer did that of *Rome*, in some part of his Time — *Obversatur oculis letissima Forma Reipublicæ, cui ad summam Libertatem nihil deest nisi pereundi Licentia.*



If Duty therefore, or Interest can bind us, we shall henceforth, laying aside all Party, and odious Names of Distinction, unite in defending, and preserving our Rights, and Liberties, which are in no Danger of being lost, but by our own abuse of them: The present (not to say approaching) Crisis of Affairs leaves us, but this Alternative—we shall either strengthen the Hands of our Gracious Sovereign, in giving Vigor to his Councils, and Arms by our Unanimity; or shall certainly encrease both the Number, and Force of our Enemies, by our Divisions: I have too good an Opinion of your Understanding, to suppose you will balance one Moment, which Part will most become you to take.

May We then, and all the People of the Land, with one Heart, and one Voice, join to support His present Majesty, and Royal Family, on the Throne, as the only Means, under God, whereby we can encrease (that is perpetuate) the Blessings we enjoy, and leave our Religion, and Liberty, an Inheritance to our Childrens Children.

F I N I S.

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